

Federal management and debt collection practices, Federal payment systems, Federal benefit programs, and for other purposes.”

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1442, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

SILK ROAD STRATEGY ACT OF 1999

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1152) to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to target assistance to support the economic and political independence of the countries of South Caucasus and Central Asia, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1152

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The ancient Silk Road, once the economic lifeline of Central Asia and the South Caucasus, traversed much of the territory now within the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

(2) Economic interdependence spurred mutual cooperation among the peoples along the Silk Road and restoration of the historic relationships and economic ties between those peoples is an important element of ensuring their sovereignty as well as the success of democratic and market reforms.

(3) The development of strong political, economic, and security ties among countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia and the West will foster stability in this region, which is vulnerable to political and economic pressures from the south, north, and east.

(4) The development of open market economies and open democratic systems in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia will provide positive incentives for international private investment, increased trade, and other forms of commercial interactions with the rest of the world.

(5) Many of the countries of the South Caucasus have secular Muslim governments that are seeking closer alliance with the United States and that have active and cordial diplomatic relations with Israel.

(6) The region of the South Caucasus and Central Asia could produce oil and gas in sufficient quantities to reduce the dependence of the United States on energy from the volatile Persian Gulf region.

(7) United States foreign policy and international assistance should be narrowly targeted to support the economic and political independence as well as democracy building, free market policies, human rights, and regional economic integration of the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

SEC. 3. POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES.

It shall be the policy of the United States in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia—

(1) to promote and strengthen independence, sovereignty, democratic government, and respect for human rights;

(2) to promote tolerance, pluralism, and understanding and counter racism and anti-Semitism;

(3) to assist actively in the resolution of regional conflicts and to facilitate the removal of impediments to cross-border commerce;

(4) to promote friendly relations and economic cooperation;

(5) to help promote market-oriented principles and practices;

(6) to assist in the development of the infrastructure necessary for communications, transportation, education, health, and energy and trade on an East-West axis in order to build strong international relations and commerce between those countries and the stable, democratic, and market-oriented countries of the Euro-Atlantic Community; and

(7) to support United States business interests and investments in the region.

SEC. 4. UNITED STATES EFFORTS TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA.

It is the sense of the Congress that the President should use all diplomatic means practicable, including the engagement of senior United States Government officials, to press for an equitable, fair, and permanent resolution to the conflicts in the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

SEC. 5. AMENDMENT TO THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1961.

Part I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new chapter:

“CHAPTER 12—SUPPORT FOR THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

“SEC. 499. UNITED STATES ASSISTANCE TO PROMOTE RECONCILIATION AND RECOVERY FROM REGIONAL CONFLICTS.

“(a) PURPOSE OF ASSISTANCE.—The purposes of assistance under this section include—

“(1) the creation of the basis for reconciliation between belligerents in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia;

“(2) the promotion of economic development in areas of the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia impacted by civil conflict and war; and

“(3) the encouragement of broad regional cooperation among countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia that have been destabilized by internal conflicts.

“(b) AUTHORIZATION FOR ASSISTANCE.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—To carry out the purposes of subsection (a), the President is authorized to provide humanitarian assistance and economic reconstruction assistance for the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia to support the activities described in subsection (c).

“(2) DEFINITION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.—In this subsection, the term ‘humanitarian assistance’ means assistance to meet humanitarian needs, including needs for food, medicine, medical supplies and equipment, education, and clothing.

“(c) ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED.—Activities that may be supported by assistance under subsection (b) include—

“(1) providing for the humanitarian needs of victims of the conflicts;

“(2) facilitating the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes; and

“(3) assisting in the reconstruction of residential and economic infrastructure destroyed by war.

“(d) POLICY.—It is the sense of the Congress that the United States should, where appropriate, support the establishment of neutral, multinational peacekeeping forces to implement peace agreements reached between belligerents in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

“SEC. 499A. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

“(a) PURPOSE OF ASSISTANCE.—The purpose of assistance under this section is to foster economic growth and development, including the conditions necessary for regional economic cooperation, among the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

“(b) AUTHORIZATION FOR ASSISTANCE.—To carry out the purpose of subsection (a), the President is authorized to provide assistance for the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia to support the activities described in subsection (c).

“(c) ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED.—In addition to the activities described in section 498, activities supported by assistance under subsection (b) should support the development of the structures and means necessary for the growth of private sector economies based upon market principles.

“(d) POLICY.—It is the sense of the Congress that the United States should—

“(1) assist the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia to develop policies, laws, and regulations that would facilitate the ability of those countries to develop free market economies and to join the World Trade Organization to enjoy all the benefits of membership; and

“(2) consider the establishment of zero-to-zero tariffs between the United States and the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

“SEC. 499B. DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE.

“(a) PURPOSE OF PROGRAMS.—The purposes of programs under this section include—

“(1) to develop the physical infrastructure necessary for regional cooperation among the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia; and

“(2) to encourage closer economic relations and to facilitate the removal of impediments to cross-border commerce among those countries and the United States and other developed nations.

“(b) AUTHORIZATION FOR PROGRAMS.—To carry out the purposes of subsection (a), the following types of programs for the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia may be used to support the activities described in subsection (c):

“(1) Activities by the Export-Import Bank of the United States to complete the review process for eligibility for financing under the Export-Import Bank Act of 1945.

“(2) The provision of insurance, reinsurance, financing, or other assistance by the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

“(3) Assistance under section 661 of this Act (relating to the Trade and Development Agency).

“(c) ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED.—Activities that may be supported by programs under subsection (b) include promoting actively the participation of United States companies and investors in the planning, financing, and construction of infrastructure for communications, transportation, including air transportation, and energy and trade, including highways, railroads, port facilities, shipping, banking, insurance, telecommunications networks, and gas and oil pipelines.

“(d) POLICY.—It is the sense of the Congress that the United States representatives at the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Finance Corporation, and the European Bank